

Wolford Mountain Reservoir begins drawdown

By
Grand Gazette

-

Jul 26, 2018

0

188

The photo shows the peninsulas that must be removed. They each have a yellow pillar at the end. The road over the dam will also be leveled.

Over the last two decades, the Wolford Mountain Reservoir has become an important economic driver for Kremmling. Concessionaire for the Wolford Mountain Reservoir campgrounds, Jeff Miller explains, "We average 600 to 1000 visitors each weekend at the reservoir each weekend." Just last weekend, Miller estimates that 130 boats were on the reservoir and notes parking lots were full.

Now the Colorado River District is releasing 275 cubic feet per second, more than is customary, which translates to a foot every three days in preparation for maintenance on the Ritschard Dam to begin September 1.

The drawdown on the reservoir comes during the peak season for the Wolford Mountain Reservoir and while it could negatively impact the economy of Kremmling as recreators see water levels go down, Jim Pokrandt, spokesperson for the Colorado River District, said folks should remember that the water body is a man-made reservoir that requires occasional maintenance work. The River District always tries to balance its maintenance work to be as least impactive to recreators while trying to get it done before winter conditions set in.

To accommodate the upcoming work, the maintenance release of water from Wolford Mountain Reservoir began earlier this month on July 15. According Pokrandt, the goal is to drawdown the dam 20 feet down from its full elevation to allow the construction work to occur before winter conditions set in. The work to level the surface of the dam and remove two peninsulas that were added to help monitor the dam is expected to be completed by mid-October.

On a positive note, Pokrandt expects the recent releases will not only fulfill water contract obligations to the Colorado River, but also bolster low stream flows in the river stemming from a poor snowpack and a dry spring and summer. "This water is a bonus to the river right now," said Pokrandt. "We expect these releases will cover our delivery obligations while also lowering the reservoir for maintenance purposes." The Colorado River District honors calls on the river and also releases water to protect endangered fish near Grand Junction.

History

The Ritschard Dam, which holds back 66,000 acre-feet of water to form Wolford Mountain Reservoir, is located 5 miles upstream of Kremmling. It is 122 feet tall and 1,910 feet wide. It was built for the River District in 1995 at a cost of \$42 million by D.H. Blattner and Sons of Minnesota.

After its completion the dam's behavior was monitored closely. In 2008, the Colorado River District became concerned the settlement of the earthen dam was advancing more than planned when measurements showed it settled nearly two feet and shifted slightly. In order to monitor the dam, sophisticated instrumentation, including inclinometers which measure slope angles, were installed on two rock peninsulas that were built on the water side of the dam. During this research, the dam was considered safe and rehabilitation was delayed. The peninsulas were built for temporary purposes and were not meant to be permanent features. It would cost more than \$100,000 to make the peninsulas permanent with safety improvements and erosion control, Pokrandt said. Contracts

The Colorado River District's Board of Directors awarded several contracts, all to northwest Colorado contractors, for the work this summer at Wolford Mountain Reservoir. The Board awarded the largest of its contracts, \$452,000, to Moody Construction & Sons Inc. of Meeker to restore the height of the Ritschard Dam. Structural engineering support for the dam crest rehabilitation has been contracted to SGM of Glenwood Springs for \$30,000. During rehabilitation of the

dam crest, a material testing consultant with laboratory capability will be required on site nearly daily. Construction monitoring and observation will also be required on a near-daily basis. To provide both of these services, the Colorado River District board awarded a time and materials contract not to exceed \$80,000 to Northwest Colorado Consultants of Steamboat Springs. Over the past nine years, the River District has installed sophisticated monitoring equipment to measure movement of the dam. Some of that equipment on the reservoir side of the dam will be removed this summer as part of the dam crest rehabilitation. Additionally, fencing around Wolford Mountain Reservoir and inside the recreation area requires constant maintenance and frequent additions and upgrades. This fencing work has been and will continue to be provided by Grand Fence of Kremmling. However to address more than customary fencing needs this summer, Grand Fence's existing contract will be increased by \$20,000.

Meeting in Town

Representatives from the Colorado River District are expected to be at the regularly scheduled Town of Kremmling board meeting on August 1, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the rehabilitation work on the Ritschard Dam that is scheduled for this summer.